

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 PRS-01 PA-01 FEA-01 ERDA-05

AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 FPC-01

H-02 INR-07 INT-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-03

USIA-06 SAM-01 OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00

FRB-03 CU-02 OPR-02 /093 W
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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6718

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SUBJ: MILITARY AND STUDENT REACTIONS TO GULF OIL ISSUE

REF: LA PAZ 3479

1. SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS CONTINUE TO PROVIDE UNIFIED SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT'S STAND OVER GULF OIL CONTROVERSY. AIR FORCE COMMANDER OSCAR ADRIAZOLA, WHO HAS JUST RETURNED FROM CONJEFAMER MEETING IN COLOMBIA, DENOUNCED GULF'S CRITICISMS OF EX-PRESIDENT BARRIENTOS AS CALUMNIES MAY 19, AND DECLARED THAT AIR FORCE WOULD NOT PERMIT CONTINUATION OF A CAMPAIGN OF DEFAMATION GAINST THE FIGURE OF BARRIENTOS (WHO WAS HIMSELF, OF COURSE, FORMERLY A COMMANDER OF THE BOLIVIAN AIR FORCE). LIKEWISE, SPOKESMAN FOR MILITARY HIGH COMMAND XAVIER PINTO TELLERIA STATED ON SAME DATE THAT ARMED FORCES GIVE THEIR COMPLETE SUPPORT TO LATEST MEASURES BEING UNDERTAKEN BY PRESIDENT BANZER TO CLARIFY GULF ISSUE. BUT A POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE ISSUE FOR ARMED FORCES WAS ALSO RAISED ON MAY 19, WHEN COL. JOSE
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PATINO AYOROA (SPEAKING AS AN EX-PRESIDENT OF YPFB) CALLED

FOR A "CRUSADE OF MORALIZATION" TO CLARIFY NOT JUST GULF OIL CASE BUT ALL OTHER INSTANCES IN WHICH SUSPICIONS EXIST OF CORRUPT DEALINGS BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. PATINO'S APPEAL, WHICH IS LIKELY TO BE RECEIVED WITH SYMPATHY BY MANY JUNIOR AND MIDDLE-GRADE OFFICERS, WOULD EXTEND SCOPE OF CURRENT INQUIRIES BEYOND ACTIVITIES OF BARRIENTOS GOVERNMENT TO THOSE OF OTHER REGIMES, INCLUDING CURRENT GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT BANZER.

2. UNIVERSITY STUDENT LEADERS IN LA PAZ, WHO HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN A SERIES OF PROTEST STRIKES AND DEMONSTRATIONS OVER PAST MONTH, RECENTLY SEIZED UPON GULF CONTROVERSY AS FURTHER MEANS OF ATTACKING THE BANZER REGIME. STUDENT ASSEMBLIES ON MAY 16 AND MAY 19 ATTEMPTED TO LINK CURRENT ISSUE OF POLICE DETENTION OF A STUDENT LEADER WITH ALLEGED GOB "COVERUP" OF FULL STORY ABOUT GULF OIL ACTIVITIES IN BOLIVIA. ON LATTER DATE, STUDENTS AT BOTH SAN ANDRES UNIVERSITY AND CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY IN LA PAZ ATTEMPTED TO BLOCK NEARBY STREETS, ONLY TO BE DISPERSED BY POLICE USING TEAR GAS AND POLICE DOGS. ACTIVISTS AT BOTH UNIVERSITIES THEN CALLED FOR A MARCH IN "DEFENSE OF THE NATIONAL DIGNITY" ON MAY 20, IN WHICH WORKERS, CAMPESINOS, SOLDIERS, POLICE AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC WERE INVITED TO JOIN AS A PROTEST AGAINST RECENT REVELATIONS CONCERNING GULF. IN RESPONSE, MINISTRY OF INTERIOR ANNOUNCED THAT ANY MARCH "TAKING AS ITS PRETEXT THE GULF CASE" WOULD BE PROHIBITED, WHILE REITERATING THAT GOB ITSELF IS THE "PRINCIPAL PARTY INTERESTED IN THE TOTAL CLARIFICATION OF THE CHARGES MADE BY THE GULF COMPANY CONCERNING POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS ..." A RELATED COMMUNIQUE FROM THE NATIONAL POLICE CHARGED "FOREIGN ELEMENTS BELONGING TO THE ARGENTINE ERP" WITH INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROPOSED MARCH, AND WARNED THAT THE SECURITY FORCES WOULD ACT "IN A DRASTIC MANNER WITHOUT ANY EXCEPTION". ON MAY 20 POLICE CORDONED OFF THE TWO UNIVERSITIES, PROHIBITING ENTRY TO ALL STUDENTS; AS A SIGN OF GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION, POLICE STATIONED BEFORE SAN ANDRES UNIVERSITY WERE ARMED WITH RIFLES AND UZI SUB-MACHINEGUNS, A HIGHLY UNUSUAL MEASURE. AS OF MIDDAY ON MAY 20, OBSERVATION BY EMBASSY OFFICERS CONFIRMED THAT STUDENTS HAD BEEN UNABLE TO ORGANIZE EFFECTIBELY TO STAGE ANNOUNCED MARCH IN FACE OF MASSIVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POLICE PRESENCE. FURTHER ATTEMPTED PROTESTS BY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED IN COMING DAYS, HOWEVER, POSSIBLY LEADING TO ARRESTS OF MORE ACTIVIST STUDENT LEADERS AND/OR CLOSURE OF TWO PA LAZ UNIVERSITIES.
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